

Pedagogy, Practice, and Psychoanalysis: Proposals for a Lacanian Curriculum

The reason for the usual misinterpretations of both Lacan's and Freud's pedagogical contribution lies in a misunderstanding of the critical position taken by psychoanalysis with respect to traditional methods and assumptions of education. Lacan's well-known critique of what he has pejoratively termed "academic discourse" (*le discours universitaire*) situates "the radical vice" in "the transmission of knowledge." Lacan thus blames "the narrow-minded horizon of pedagogues" for having reduced the strong notion of teaching to a "functional apprenticeship." (Felman, 1987, p. 71)

According to Pitt et al (1998, p. 3): "recent inquiry into the stakes of student-teacher relations, into the resistances of learning..., and into the ways subjectivity is constituted through education... draws inspiration from both within and outside a 'feminist rereading of Lacan's rereading of Freud'." Moreover, "alongside such rereadings, current writing in psychoanalysis and education has taken up the many different threads within the fabric of psychoanalysis itself, including object relations, ego psychology and Jungian analysis." Consequently, since "this has occurred within... the 'postdisciplinary' atmosphere of the academy suggests that what constitutes a renewal in psychoanalysis and education is not just a rereading of the immediate textual past (although it is that), but also a reading *with*, an openness to exploring with an oft-times eclectic spirit, what psychoanalysis and education have to offer one another."¹ This, Pitt et al note, entails "moving beyond the 'what' of knowledge and beyond the disciplines that structure such knowledge within the academy—for the very modes of intelligibility and certainty that disciplines offer are, of course, precisely what a reading of psychoanalysis *with* education undermines." It is very much in this spirit of "reading psychoanalysis *with* education" and "moving beyond the 'what' of knowledge and beyond the disciplines that structure such knowledge within the academy" that the proposed symposium proceeds.

Attempts to capture the essence of teaching "in the immediate textual past," in terms of theory, practice, or a combination of the two—reflective practice—have been hotly debated in education circles, so much so that the shortcomings of each of these approaches is now undeniably apparent. But if each of these approaches fails to capture

¹ Recent telling examples of this renewal are: Deborah Britzman's (1998) *Lost Subjects, Contested Objects: Toward a Psychoanalytic Inquiry of Learning*, and Sharon Todd's (1997) *Learning Desire: Perspectives on Pedagogy, Culture, and the Unsaid*. Other recent psychoanalytically-informed educational analyses include: Appel (1996, In Press); Bogdan et al (1997); Briton (1995, 1997a, 1997b); Britzman (1996); Craig (1994); Donald (1997); Doyle & Fuller (1990); Edgerton (1993); Harper (1996); Jagodzinski (1996); Kelly (1997); Kincheloe & Pinar (1991); Pitt (1996, 1997); Rankin (1992); Robertson (1997a, 1997b); Taubman (1990).

the essence of the teaching process—in terms of general principles (theory), specific behaviors (practice), or a combination of the two (reflective practice)—what processes of inquiry remain open to curriculum theorists who wish to pursue a fuller understanding of pedagogy and practice?

Through the medium of an interactive symposium, a fruitful avenue of inquiry will be suggested—one that focuses on aspects of the teaching process that have, for the most part, remained veiled: the unconscious, desire, and identity. The proposed symposium is comprised of six participants, each of whom will table a commentary paper and speak to the challenge of acknowledging and incorporating these previously veiled aspects of teaching in the curriculum-building process. Presentations will be closely monitored to ensure that half of the two hour session is reserved for those who attend the session to voice comments, concerns, and questions related to the issues raised. All six presenters will discuss the issues of the unconscious, desire, and identity within a Lacanian framework. Each presenter, however, draws upon other primary sources, as well as the work of Lacan's commentators, to support her or his position.

The first presenter asks us to consider the nature of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). PCK is typically regarded as either a blending of content and pedagogy—how a particular topic is organized and represented for instruction—or the mental constructions teachers hold of the relationship between student learning and pre-given knowledge. Both of these conceptualizations of PCK share representationalist assumptions about knowledge and a knower: there is a pre-given, extramental world that the teacher can represent, mirror, copy in his or her intramental space. Such assumptions ignore the complexity of the teaching process. This presentation focuses on an alternative way of understanding PCK, one that looks beyond representationalist assumptions. The paper draws upon Lacan's notions of the dynamics of identity, desire, fantasy, and the real. The paper addresses such questions as: what is the nature of PCK and how can its growth be fostered during the preparation of preservice teachers?

The second presenter focuses on recent efforts to develop a teacher education curriculum that looks beyond the "giving and telling" of reflective practice to one that pays much closer attention to how the teacher education curriculum shapes the desires and impacts the identities of teacher educators and preservice teachers. This paper explores the limits of reflective practice in its investigation of the needs of teacher educators and preservice teachers to be perceived as "teachers." The presenter will address such questions as "What does it mean to be good teacher?" and "How might teacher educators and preservice teachers best come to terms with the interminable process of becoming a teacher?" Three forms of resistance to this emergent teacher education model will be identified and potential solutions proposed.

The third presentation notes how Lacan's linguistic turn appears to offer little in response to traditional pan-sexualist attacks upon psychoanalysis. From Lacan's

standpoint, one might even say that the problem with any new enlightened curriculum is enlightenment itself. First, because the policing of the teacher-student relationship, while motivated by the enlightened concern for the safeguarding of students—and sometimes teachers—from sexual harassment and worse, obscures how the obscene is not a corruption of that relationship, but constitutive of it. While teaching is clearly not the same as analysis, teaching *is* a metonymy for it, in that teaching is defined by a transferential relationship. Transference, then, is always mappable to sex, and teaching is always mappable to child sex. Second, because Lacan's gift to teaching is to restore to it the opulent repugnance of obscene language. For Lacan, the obscene is constitutive of language itself, so civil language is always language in denial. The civil language of teaching must deny the Lacanian claim that meaning, that cherished Enlightenment prize, is simply and thoroughly an imaginary thing. For Lacan, every assertion of meaning, every communication as such, is a literal waving/waiving of the phallus. Teaching, on this account, appears as the conflation of statutory rape and flashing—but not really, or at least wholly. Jane Gallop hints at a way out. This presentation takes up that hint, and considers what “making a big stink” about teaching might entail.

The fourth presentation suggests that it is in the formation of the sufficient self, the “good enough teacher,” that psychoanalysis raises some useful questions about what we mean by teacher competency and curricula that strive to achieve “excellence.” The impulse to formally assess teacher competencies has led to a proliferation of cultural representations of teaching practice as ideally performed within the discourse of the Master. Within the gaze of the Symbolic register, these representations attempt to suture “teacher performance” with “demonstration.” This presentation explores the difficulties teachers report in their efforts to live and work within the discourse of the “perfect Other” and representations of teaching that draw on the Ego Ideal.

The fifth presentation proceeds from the perspective of post-Lacanian psychoanalysis and attempts to articulate the psychic structures of pedagogical discourses which are opposed to the phallic economy of normative Oedipalization in the classroom, referred to here as the “family romance.” It is argued that feminist, critical (neo- and postmarxist), and queer pedagogies present such challenges. Each is characterized by certain psychic structures of speaking being (*parlêtre*): respectively identified as hysterical, obsessional, and perverse psychic structures. The pedagogical position of Jane Gallop is further developed and explored for its extreme perverse teaching strategy. The question of eros and the pedagogical relationship circulate throughout this entire text.

The sixth and final presentation explores the roles the unconscious and desire play in the process whereby individuals are constituted as “teacher.” The presenter draws upon central concepts from the psychoanalytic tradition, and the work of several theorists working in that tradition—Castoriadis, Copjec, Lacan, Laclau and Mouffe, Lefort, and Žižek—to explore this paradoxical yet intriguing process. The presentation builds upon the psychoanalytic notion of the decentred subject to develop a fuller

understanding of the factors at play in the process of collective identity formation. The paper concludes with a consideration of implications of this process for a teacher education curriculum and teacher educators engaged in progressive forms of practice.

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